



Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CHILDREN'S PARADE FOR CARNIVAL 70



Page 9

### Carnival Schedule

**ORANJESTAD** – Carnival is in full-swing in Aruba for the next two weeks, which will culminate with a weekend of back-to-back parades on the streets! Do not miss the most important upcoming events.

#### Schedule di Carnaval

**Friday 09 February:**  
School Parade in Oranjestad starting 10am;  
School Parade in San Nicolas starting 10am.

#### Saturday 10 February:

Grand Parade in San Nicolas starting at 11am.

#### Sunday 11 February:

Grand Parade in Oranjestad start-

ing at 10am;  
Burning of the Momo at Aruba Harbour Arena starting at 7pm.

#### Monday 12 February:

Carnival Monday.



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# Biden sets tighter standards for deadly soot pollution from tailpipes, smokestacks

By **MATTHEW DALY**  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Biden administration is setting tougher standards for deadly soot pollution, saying that reducing fine particle matter from tailpipes, smokestacks and other industrial sources could prevent thousands of premature deaths a year. Environmental and public health groups hailed the new Environmental Protection Agency rule finalized Wednesday as a major step in improving the health of Americans, including future generations. Industry groups warned it could lead to the loss of manufacturing jobs and even shut down power plants or refineries. Business groups and Republican-leaning states are likely to challenge the rule in court. EPA Administrator Michael Regan said the rule would have \$46 billion in net health benefits by 2032, including prevention of up to 800,000 asthma attacks and 4,500 premature deaths. He said the rule will especially benefit children, older adults and those with heart and lung conditions, as well as people in low-income and minority communities ad-



Emissions rise from the smokestacks at the Jeffrey Energy Center coal power plant as the sun sets Sept. 18, 2021, near Emmett, Kan.

a prosperous and booming economy." The rule sets maximum levels of 9 micrograms of fine particle pollution per cubic meter of air, down from 12 micrograms established a decade ago under the Obama administration. The rule sets an air quality level that states and counties must achieve in the coming years to reduce pollution from power plants, vehicles,

Administration officials brushed aside those concerns, saying the industry has used technical improvements to meet previous soot standards and can adapt to meet the new standard as well. Soot pollution has declined by 42% since 2000, even as the U.S. gross domestic product has increased by 52%, Regan said. "So we've heard this argument before, but the facts are well-established that these standards really will increase the quality of life for so many people, especially those who are disproportionately impacted," he said. Manish Bapna, president and CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group, said the EPA was "putting public health first by requiring polluters to cut soot from the air we all breathe." Ben Jealous, executive director of the Sierra Club, said that opponents' "resistance is a stark reminder that the fight for clean air and a healthier future is far from over." The new rule does not impose pollution controls on specific industries; instead, it lowers the annual standard for fine particulate matter for overall air quality. The EPA will use air sampling to identify counties and other areas that do not meet the new standard. States would then have 18 months to develop compliance plans for those areas. States that do

not meet the new standard by 2032 could face penalties, although EPA said it expects that 99% of U.S. counties will be able to meet the revised annual standard by 2032. Industry groups and Republican officials dispute that and say a limit of 9 micrograms per cubic meter could sharply increase the number of U.S. counties in violation of the soot standard. Companies in those places would have difficulty obtaining permits to build or expand industrial plants. The American Forest and Paper Association called the new rule "unworkable" and said it undermines Biden's promise to increase manufacturing jobs in the U.S. "We are very concerned that many of the modernization projects in the paper and wood products industry and across U.S. manufacturing will no longer be able to move forward," said Heidi Brock, the group's president and CEO. The paper lobby was among 71 industry groups that warned the White House in a letter that a lower soot standard could force companies to locate new facilities in foreign countries with weaker air-quality standards, thereby undermining Biden's economic and environmental goals. The standard for particle pollution, more commonly known as soot, was set in late 2012 under Democratic President Barack Obama and left un-

changed by Republican President Donald Trump, who overrode a scientific recommendation for a lower standard in his final days in office. EPA scientists have estimated exposure at current limits causes the early deaths of thousands of Americans annually from heart disease and lung cancer, along with other health problems. The new EPA rule would require states, counties and tribal governments to meet a stricter air quality standard for fine particulate matter up to 2.5 microns in diameter — far smaller than the diameter of a human hair. The standard would not force polluters to shut down, but the EPA and state regulators could use it as the basis for other rules that target pollution from specific sources such as diesel-fueled trucks, refineries and power plants. EPA said it will work with states, counties and tribes to account for and respond to wildfires, an increasing source of soot pollution, especially in the West. "EPA recognizes the increasing challenges and human health impacts that wildland fire and smoke pose in communities all around the country," the agency said in a fact sheet. EPA allows states and air agencies to request exemptions from air-quality standards due to "exceptional events," including wildfires and prescribed fires. A 2023 report by the American Lung Association found that nearly 64 million Americans live in counties that experience unhealthy daily spikes in soot pollution and nearly 19 million live in counties that exceed annual limits for soot pollution. Most of those counties were in 11 Western states, the report said. People of color were 61% more likely than white people to live in a county with unhealthy air quality, the report said. Bakersfield, California, tied with Visalia in the state's San Joaquin Valley as the most polluted city for year-round particle pollution. Six of the 10 cities with the most soot pollution were in California, and two more were in the West: Medford, Oregon and greater Phoenix. □

Associated Press



Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan speaks at the University of Maryland, May 11, 2023, in College Park, Md.

Associated Press

versely affected by decades of industrial pollution. The rule "really does represent what the Biden-Harris administration is all about, which is understanding that healthy people equal a healthy economy," he told reporters Tuesday. "We do not have to sacrifice people to have

industrial sites and wildfires. The rule comes as Democratic President Joe Biden seeks reelection, and some Democrats have warned that a tough soot standard could harm his chances in key industrial states such as Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin.

# CBO projects a \$188 billion decrease in this year's federal budget deficit, but debt would then grow

By **FATIMA HUSSEIN** and **JOSH BOAK**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Congressional Budget Office said Wednesday that it expects the federal budget deficit to drop by \$188 billion this fiscal year to \$1.5 trillion, a short-lived dip as the annual shortfall is likely to rise over the next nine years.

Two major factors are behind the decline in the budget deficit this year, each of them one-off events that reflect the challenge for lawmakers in trying to close the growing gap between tax revenues and spending.

First, the current fiscal year started on an October weekend, which caused its payments to be booked in fiscal 2023 without offsetting revenues.

Second, tax revenues are expected to increase because of better returns on financial investments and the collection of taxes from last year that the government postponed because of natural disasters.

Over the next decade, the cumulative budget deficits will be 7% smaller than the nonpartisan CBO forecast last year. That's mainly because of an agreement President Joe Biden signed last summer with Congressional Republicans that temporarily lifted the



The likeness of George Washington is seen on a U.S. one dollar bill, March 13, 2023, in Marple Township, Pa.

statutory debt ceiling in exchange for restrictions on government spending. But also, economic growth looks stronger than what was forecast and more people are working.

Still, deficits are a problem for lawmakers in the years to come because of the burden of servicing the total debt load, an aging population that pushes up the total cost of Social Security and Medicare and rising health care expenses. The report also projects that the nation's publicly held debt is set to increase from 99% of gross domestic

product at the end of 2024 to 116% of GDP the highest level ever recorded by the end of 2034. Behind that increase are persistently large gaps between how much the government receives from taxes and how much it spends, a gap filled by borrowing from investors.

Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, said, "Policymakers need to take this somber moment to reflect on the grave situation we face and commit themselves to do better." While the deal

last summer to lift the debt ceiling and limit spending "was a good start," she said, "there is so much more to be done."

The CBO projections often contain uncertainties as laws can change or the economy can perform much better or far worse than anticipated. For instance, this time last year, the office projected the unemployment rate would jump to 4.7% in 2023, while the current unemployment rate is 3.7%.

The CBO anticipates that the unemployment rate will hit 4.4% at the end of 2024.

There are ongoing disagreements between Democrats and Republicans on the causes and possible fixes for the national debt, making it a perpetual campaign talking point that seldom leads to a sweeping solution.

Republicans blame Democrats for spending too much during President Joe Biden's tenure, while Democrats blame Republicans for the costs of tax cuts undertaken during Donald Trump's presidency.

Bill Hoagland, senior vice president at the Bipartisan Policy Center, said in a statement that the political brinkmanship adds uncertainty to the economic outlook. "Members from both parties claim to agree that the nation's fiscal path is unsustainable and in need of correction," Hoagland said. "Difficult decisions about entitlement reform, revenue generation and the budget process are required." The latest 10-year deficit projections from the CBO might be somewhat optimistic, as they assume that many of the tax cuts that Trump signed into law expire at the end of 2025. Republicans want to preserve all of the tax cuts and possibly expand them, which would eat into expected revenues at a time when spending would simultaneously increase. □

**Associated Press**

## Medical examiner rules death of baby decapitated during delivery was a homicide

By **SUDHIN THANAWALA**

**Associated Press**

**ATLANTA (AP)** — The death of a Georgia couple's baby that was decapitated during delivery has been classified by a medical examiner as a homicide, their attorneys announced Wednesday. Treveon Taylor Jr.'s parents have sued the hospital and the doctor who delivered the baby in July. Both have denied wrongdoing.

The Clayton County Medical Examiner's Office found the immediate cause of the baby's death was a broken

neck and said human action was to blame, according to an office statement distributed by attorneys at a news conference Wednesday.

The boy's parents, Jessica Ross and Treveon Isaiah Taylor Sr., say Dr. Tracey St. Julian delayed a surgical procedure and failed to seek help quickly when the baby got stuck during delivery. Instead, they say she applied excessive force to the baby's head and neck.

"This is something that is clearly contraindicated," their attorney Roderick Ed-

mond, who is also a physician, said Wednesday. "No credible, no reasonably competent obstetrician should ever do this." Taylor Sr. said the couple wants justice for their son. Attorneys for St. Julian said they reject the finding that the baby's injury happened before death.

"The separation of the head from the fetal body occurred post-mortem and any assertion to the contrary is false," they said in a statement. "Although tragic, that rare outcome has been reported in the medical literature and



Jessica Ross and Treveon Isaiah Taylor Sr., parents of a baby who was decapitated during delivery, react during a press conference at their lawyers office in Atlanta, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024.

**Associated Press**

can happen in the absence of any wrongdoing by the

physician, which is the case here." □

# Massachusetts governor nominates former romantic partner to state's highest court

By **STEVE LeBLANC**  
Associated Press

**BOSTON (AP)** — Gov. Maura Healey on Wednesday nominated an appeals court judge and former romantic partner with whom she shared a home for several years to an open seat on the state's highest court. Massachusetts Appeals Court Associate Justice Gabrielle R. Wolohojian would serve as an associate justice of the Supreme Judicial Court if her nomination is approved. Wolohojian is the second nomination to the state's highest court by Healey, the first woman and first open member of the LGBTQ community to be elected governor of Massachusetts.

"There is no one more qualified or more well prepared to join the SJC than Justice Wolohojian. I'm proud of that nomination and I'm proud of nominating someone who is so deserving and so qualified. It is what the commonwealth deserves," Healey told reporters. "Of course, I had a person-



Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey takes questions from reporters, Jan. 31, 2024, during a news conference in Boston.

al relationship with Judge Wolohojian for many years so I happen to also know something about her character and her integrity and the kind of person she is," Healey, a Democrat, added. Healey said Wolohojian received the unanimous recommendation of the

state's Judicial Nomination Commission a 27-member board appointed by the governor. Healey wouldn't say if there were any other individuals recommended for the vacancy. "There is no one more qualified. I am very comfortable in saying that," Healey said.

**Associated Press**  
"I don't want the fact that she had a personal relationship with me to deprive the commonwealth of a person who's most qualified for the position." Healey said she didn't think Wolohojian would have to recuse herself from cases involving the administration, saying she currently

presides over matters involving state agencies and the executive office. Amy Carnevale, chair of the Massachusetts Republican Party called on Healey to withdraw Wolohojian's name. "It is highly inappropriate for the governor to nominate to Massachusetts' highest court an individual with whom she had a long-term romantic relationship in the past. This nomination clearly demonstrates a lack of accountability inherent in one-party rule," Carnevale said in a statement. Wolohojian, 63, would fill the seat vacated by Justice David Lowy. Last year Healey nominated then-state solicitor Elizabeth Dewar to the high court. Wolohojian was appointed to the Appeals Court in February 2008 and has authored more than 900 decisions, according to Healey's office. She has also served as the chair of the Supreme Judicial Court's Advisory Committee on the Rules of Appellate Procedure. □

# Ex-Oakland police chief sues city and mayor to get his job back

**OAKLAND, Calif. (AP)** — A former California police chief fired from his post last year has sued the city of Oakland and its mayor, saying he was unlawfully terminated in retaliation for criticizing the federal court-appointed monitor over-

seeing the department. LeRonne Armstrong filed his lawsuit in Alameda County Superior Court on Monday. He seeks reinstatement as police chief, the post Mayor Sheng Thao fired him from in February 2023 after a probe ordered by

the oversight monitor found he mishandled two misconduct cases. Oakland has been without a permanent police chief since, even as violent crime, robbery and vehicle theft climbed in the city of 400,000 across the bay from San Francisco. On Tuesday, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced he will deploy 120 California Highway Patrol officers to Oakland to assist with targeted crackdowns on criminal activity, including vehicle and retail theft. Preliminary data shows that crime rose in Oakland last year, despite falling in other California urban centers, Newsom's office said. Last month, In-N-Out Burger announced it will close its first location in its 75-year history due to car break-ins, property damage, theft and robberies at its only restaurant in Oakland.

Oakland's police department has been under federal oversight since 2003 after a rookie officer came forward to report abuse of power by a group of officers known as the Oakland "Riders." The case resulted in the department being required to enact more than four dozen reform measures and report its progress to an outside monitor and a federal judge. The mayor said in firing Armstrong last February that she had lost confidence in the police chief after he and the department failed to properly investigate and discipline a sergeant who was involved in a hit-and-run with his patrol car and who, in a separate incident, fired his service weapon inside an elevator at police headquarters. In his complaint, Armstrong

says the department had made great strides and was on track to regain its independence when the federal monitor said there were problems with police leadership and ordered the outside investigation into the sergeant. Armstrong says the monitor and his team "transformed routine instances of lower-level misconduct into a complete indictment" of the department and chief. Armstrong said in his complaint that the mayor, who was newly elected at the time, was intimidated by the oversight monitor and buckled to pressure. Thao's office on Wednesday referred requests for comment to the city attorney's office, which said in a statement that it had not been served with the complaint. □



Oakland Police Chief LeRonne Armstrong speaks to members of the press and supporters at Acts Full Gospel Church, Feb. 5, 2023, in Oakland, Calif.

Associated Press

## China, U.S. hold economic talks as trade issues heat up on the campaign trail

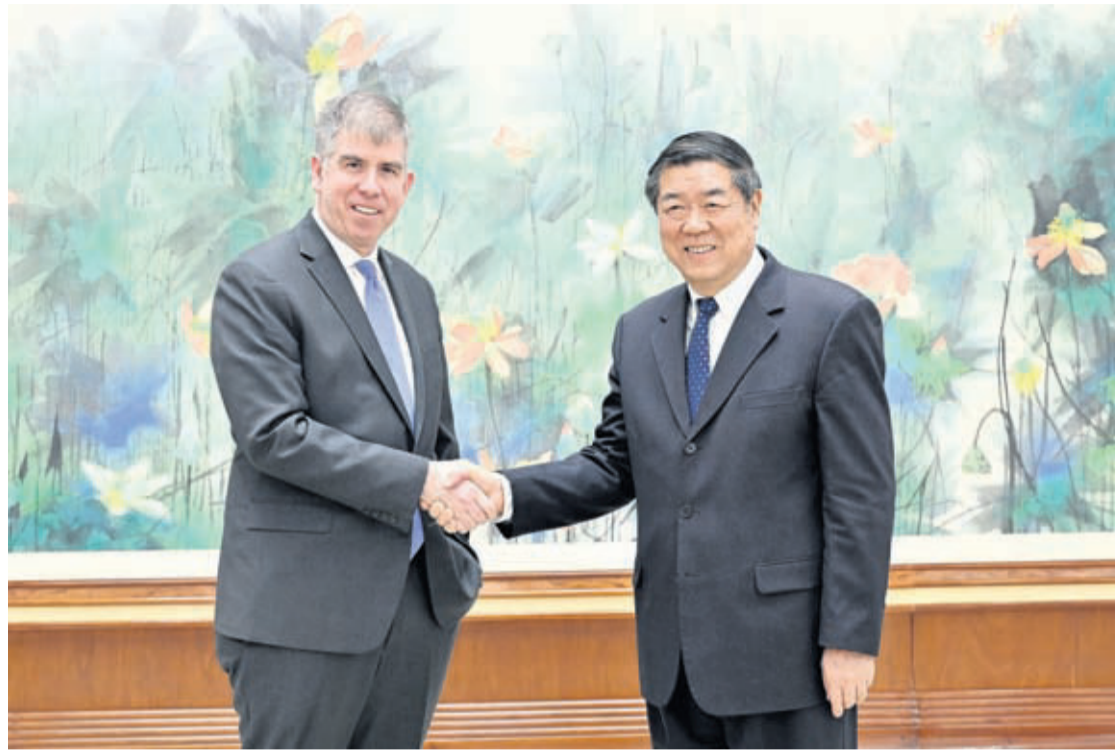
By **ELAINE KURTENBACH**  
AP Business Writer

**BANGKOK (AP)** — Chinese and U.S. officials have met in Beijing for talks on tough issues dividing the two largest economies, as trade and tariffs increasingly draw attention in the run-up to the U.S. presidential election.

China's Ministry of Finance said Beijing raised objections to higher tariffs on Chinese exports, two-way investment restrictions and other limits on trade and technology during the talks by the countries' Economic Working Group. In a statement, it characterized the Monday-Tuesday talks as "constructive."

The talks sent a "positive signal," the Global Times, a newspaper of China's ruling Communist Party, said in an article published late Tuesday.

"This positive trend, despite lingering disputes, offers much-needed reassurance for businesses of the two countries as well as the international commu-



In this photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, right, shakes hands with Jay Shambaugh, the Under Secretary of U.S. Department of Treasury prior to their 3rd China-US Economic Working Group Meeting in Beijing, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2024.

Associated Press

nity amid rising global challenges," it said.

The U.S. Treasury Department said U.S. officials reiterated concerns over Chinese industrial policy practices and overcapacity, and the resulting impact on U.S. workers and firms.

That reflects worries that as China's economy slows, partly due to a prolonged crisis in its property market but also longer term trends such as an aging population, its leaders are likely to rely more heavily on boosting export manufacturing

to make up for weak demand at home.

Given China's already huge market shares in many industries, that could boost capacity to unsustainable levels and crowd foreign manufacturers out of many industries, some

economists say.

One example: photo-voltaic solar panels, where massive investment means that China controls about 80% of the market share for all manufacturing stages, according to a recent report by the International Energy Agency. The rapid ascent of Chinese suppliers has raised proposals in Europe for import controls, but those could slow the region's progress in combating climate change but cutting carbon emissions.

The two sides said the talks in Beijing also touched on issues such as debt problems in developing countries, financial cooperation and economic policies.

"U.S. officials reaffirmed that the U.S. is not seeking to decouple the two economies and instead seeks a healthy economic relationship that provides a level playing field for American companies and workers," the Treasury Department said.

It said both sides agreed to meet again in April. □

## NATO allies warn Hungary not to hold up Sweden's membership as US patience wears thin

By **LORNE COOK**  
Associated Press

**BRUSSELS (AP)** — U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said that he and his NATO counterparts cautioned Hungary on Wednesday against further

delaying Sweden's membership in the military alliance, and he warned that patience in Washington has its limits.

Lawmakers from the party of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán boycot-

ted an emergency session of parliament on Monday where a vote was scheduled to place Sweden's bid to join NATO on the legislative agenda, adding to 18 months of delays that have angered Hungary's allies.

The governing Fidesz party, which holds an absolute majority in Hungary's parliament, has stalled Sweden's bid since July 2022, alleging that Swedish politicians have told "blatant lies" about the state of Hungarian democracy. The party insists that Sweden's prime minister must come to Hungary first.

"We heard security adviser after security adviser say that it's past time for Sweden to get in, and to directly address the representative from Hungary," Sullivan told reporters after

a meeting of the organization's top security officials at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

Sullivan said that he and his colleagues had impressed upon Hungary that "it's a matter of credibility and obligation that they take the necessary steps" to complete the parliamentary procedures to ratify Sweden's accession.

Sweden, along with neighboring Finland, set aside decades of military non-alignment to seek protection under NATO's collective security umbrella after Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

Finland has since joined the trans-Atlantic alliance. The country, along with the other 30 allies, must all agree that Sweden should stand

among NATO's ranks. Hungary is the only member standing in its way.

Sullivan said that he wouldn't "stand here today and make particular threats, or speculation about steps that we would take down the road, but of course our patience on this can't be unlimited either." He said the U.S. will "continue to watch it carefully, but hope that there is a constructive resolution to this issue in the very near term." Orbán, who has broken ranks with NATO allies by adopting a Kremlin-friendly stance toward Russia's war in Ukraine, has said that he invited Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to Budapest to discuss "future cooperation in the field of security and defense as allies and partners." □



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, right, and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan address a media conference at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024.

Associated Press

## Fossil-dependent Puerto Rico can fully shift to clean energy by 2050, a two-year federal study says

By **DÁNICA COTO**  
Associated Press

**SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)**

— As Puerto Rico struggles with chronic power outages and a decaying electric grid, federal officials believe the U.S. territory that is heavily dependent on fossil fuels can fully shift to clean energy by 2050, according to a report released Wednesday that has been two years in the making.

The report by the U.S. Department of Energy and the Federal Emergency Management Agency surprised those who thought that a recent law requiring Puerto Rico to reach 40% of clean energy by next year and 100% by 2050 was unrealistic.

"This transition will be a substantial effort and won't happen overnight, but 100% clean energy is 100% possible," said Agustín Carbó, Puerto Rico's grid modernization director within the U.S. Department of Energy.

Power plants that rely on coal, petroleum and natu-



Traffic lights are out of service during a blackout in San Juan, Puerto Rico, early April 7, 2022.

Associated Press

ral gas currently generate about 97% of Puerto Rico's electricity, with renewables accounting for only 3%, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The U.S. Department of Energy and the Federal Emergency Management

Agency aim to change that.

As part of the push, officials on Wednesday announced a new federally funded program that will subsidize residential rooftop solar and battery storage systems for up to 30,000

low-income households on the island. Homeowners who qualify can start applying by Feb. 22.

The two-year study found that Puerto Rico has more than tenfold the renewable energy resources required to meet the island's

demands through 2050, but that new infrastructure capable of generating hundreds of megawatts is needed.

Officials warned that such an investment could lead to additional rate increases on an island that already has a much higher electric rate compared with the U.S. mainland. Residential rates are 24 cents per kilowatt-hour, compared with an average of 16 cents in the U.S. mainland. Meanwhile, industrial rates are 25 cents per kWh, compared with 8 cents in the mainland.

"A strategic plan to control rate impacts while achieving better reliability over the near term is needed," the report stated.

Rate increases are particularly concerning in Puerto Rico, which has the highest poverty rate compared with any U.S. state at more than 40% and has struggled to attract new investors as it emerges from the biggest U.S. municipal bankruptcy in history. □

## ExxonMobil to explore for oil and gas in offshore area under dispute by Guyana and Venezuela

By **BERT WILKINSON**  
Associated Press

**GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP)**

— ExxonMobil said it plans to explore for oil and gas in a disputed area off South America's coast where the Venezuelan military had previously expelled two U.S. oil companies. The move could escalate tensions between Venezuela and neighboring Guyana, which awarded the exploration license.

Guyana considers the area part of its Essequibo region, but Venezuela has long claimed it as its own, holding a referendum in December in which voters supported a push to annex it.

Robert Persaud, Guyana's foreign secretary, told The Associated Press on

Wednesday that ExxonMobil has every right to work in that region "because it is within established Guyana waters in a fully demarcated area."

The oil giant said Tuesday that it expects to drill two exploratory wells north and west of its prolific Stabroek block, where three oil fields are producing close to 650,000 barrels of oil a day. The president of ExxonMobil Guyana, Alistair Routledge, told reporters that the concessions were granted by Guyana and that the company is committed to its operations despite the country's ongoing tensions with Venezuela.

"We are not going anywhere," he said.

Previous attempts to explore for oil and gas in that

area have failed. In 2019, ExxonMobil was forced to abandon exploration activities after a Venezuelan military helicopter tried to land on a seismic vessel. And in 2013, officials aboard a Venezuelan gunboat detained the crew of a seismic vessel contracted by a Texas petroleum company for a week before releasing them.

The latest push by ExxonMobil comes as Guyana and Venezuela prepare to meet for a second time to try and diffuse the dispute over the Essequibo region. Following mediation talks in December, both sides agreed not to threaten or use force against each other but failed to reach a resolution.

Meanwhile, the U.S. gov-

ernment is increasing its military aid to Guyana and has promised to help buy new aircraft, helicopters, a fleet of military drones and, for the first time, radar tech-

nology.

Essequibo is a mineral-rich territory that accounts for two-thirds of Guyana and lies near big offshore oil deposits. □



High school students walk past ExxonMobil flags as they arrive to a job fair at the University of Guyana in Georgetown, Guyana, April 21, 2023.

Associated Press

# Today is going to be a good day

**(Oranjestad)—Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.**

## Nature Calls



The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website [www.arubanationalpark.org](http://www.arubanationalpark.org)

## Philip's Animal Garden



To stay with the animals, let's hop to an amazing place. Something different to do, an experience that is to be enjoyed by people of all ages. Welcome to Philip's Animal Garden. We are not talking about a zoo here, this is actually a sanctuary for all types of creatures, from

horses to peacocks, kangaroos to turtles, monkeys, goats, and many, many more different species. The place was founded in 2009 and it is the only organization rescuing and rehabilitating exotic animals in Aruba, which has resulted in an amazing collection of these animals. They provide a suitable living environment for all the rescued animals. Up until now the owner, Philip, has built this shelter with his own efforts; building all the cages from scratch, designing all structures and welding them with his own bare hands. His goal is to upgrade the facilities to a world-class animal shelter with veterinary care and round-the-clock staffs. With the input from the Aruban community and visitors they provide the best care for these animals. Please check out their website for more information: [www.philipsanimalgarden.com](http://www.philipsanimalgarden.com).

## The Lighthouse



No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. [www.arubalighthouse.com](http://www.arubalighthouse.com) will give you more information.

## Kayak in the Mangroves



Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you

are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some workout -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. Its fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook.

## Take an "off-road" sightseeing tour



A must-do activity on the island is for sure taking an off-road sightseeing tour. If you have a rented car, you can drive through the north-eastern side of Aruba and explore the natural pools, caves, rock formations and gorgeous view of the Atlantic Ocean. To access most of these sights, like the natural pool (Conchi) and the Guadirikiri and Fontein caves, you must enter through the Arikok National Park and buy a day pass. Then you drive up the rugged road that leads you through the white dunes, caves and along the wind turbines. Other locations, like the Ayo and Casibari Rock formation are situated more in the center of the island, and are free for guests, 24 hours a day.

## Go for a shopping spree in the city center



Need a new bathing suit? Head to the city center of Oranjestad, where there is countless of different stores—both high end and more affordable—that can offer you the service you deserve! Local shopping stores often offer a more affordable price, and have a variety of clothes, shoes, bathing suites, purses and more. Along the Royal Plaza strip, there are numerous jewelry stores with great quality jewelry. In the Renaissance mall, you can shop high-end luxury brands, like Dolce & Gabbana, Kate Spade, Louis Vuitton and more.

Around the high-rise hotel area near Palm Beach, the Paseo Herencia Mall contain a variety of shopping stores, restaurants, small food stands and even a movie theater! □



## Papillon: The butterfly effect of magnificent food



**PALM BEACH** — Do you remember the film "Papillon" starring Steve McQueen? Papillon restaurant is the island's example where 'life imitates art.' The décor, especially the restrooms, was inspired by the movie. For more than a decade this restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. Welcome in the world of wonders where ambiance, taste and service come together and you feel you are being welcomed in the home of the owner and her team.

"We find it really important that our guests have fun; can relax while listening to live music while their taste buds are being tickled by France, The Netherlands and the Caribbean. We offer a unique fusion of dishes and a night not to forget," says owner Tina. As our special guest you can choose to dine inside our heartwarming airconditioned restaurant or we also offer outside dining on a cozy, elegant terrace with great ambiance of the surroundings. Perfect setting for an enjoyable time people watching while sipping on a delicious cocktail.

### Fresh oysters, caviar and wild boar

You are on vacation, life is to enjoy! If you want some-



thing special, a different flow than the usual, then Papillon is the place to go. Foodies are in heaven here with classic French dishes such as Foie Gras, Frog Legs, fresh Oysters coming in on a weekly basis from Holland, Escargots, Dover Sole à la Meunière flown in from Europe and filleted at the table, Duck Breast seared on the skin, roasted and braised Lamb in Balashi beer and slow braised Wild Boar Shank. Do not leave without trying the exclusive recommendation: Caviar! All of this combined with an extensive wine list from around the world makes Papillon a must-do on your Aruban vacation.

### Let the music play!

Another reason to visit us is our Live Entertainment Schedule all through the week.

Get all cozy and warmed up on Sundays and Mondays by Marisella and her enchanting acoustic tunes accompanied by percussion only.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Jairo will give you a real Saxophone treat while on Wednesday you can sit back, relax and enjoy your dinner while DJ Jason brings you the most smooth jazz and lounge music for a dreamy night.

The musicians interact with the guests & requests can be sent in. The live tunes definitely add to the experience.

### Vegetarian vibes present

Impressive vegetarian/vegan dishes are



set up especially for the guests by the chef and Meredith from Vegan Aruba. "We offer vegan choices that are really good and tasty. Our daily soup is always vegan too". What are you waiting for, make sure to pay a visit to this elegant yet laid-back restaurant while on Aruba. You are most welcome!

### Chef's Garden 6 course dinner by Papillon

Our one of a kind executive chef Juan Ludena gets extra creative outside the kitchen of Papillon Restaurant. Serving a 6 course surprise menu featuring his international flavors and creativity with refined dishes, chef Juan Ludena is determined to give you a night to remember. Wine pairing is optional. The chef's secret garden is located in a local replica of the Aruba traditional 'cunucu' house. The tropical garden is the setting for a magical in-home private dining experience.

For more information about this magnificent option, please send us an email or ask our wait staff.

Papillon Restaurant is located at The Village across the Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort & Casino and within walking distance of all other major hotels.

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## Highlights of the Children's Parade for Carnival 70

SMAC shared on its Facebook page the highlights of Aruba's children's parade for this year. Here, we'll share with you some of the published results, to give our children the well-deserved spotlight for their great work and contribution to our beloved carnival.

Regarding the Luxurious Roadpiece category, in first place, the Kung Fu Kids from the Champagne Kids group won, and from the same group, they also achieved second place with the Super Mario theme. In third place, with great pride, TOB Kids won with the theme "Seize Your Moment." However, in the same Roadpiece category, the Champion Roadpiece was "Roll With It" by Empire Kids in first place, followed by "Adventure in Amazonia" by Don Flip in second place, and "Seize Your Moment" by TOB Kids in third place.

In the Luxurious Float category, this Friday, February 9th, the Secondary School Parade will take place in Oranjestad. The route begins at Aruba Entertainment Center Dakota, passes through Avenida Milio Croes, Vondellaan, and

Champion Float, "Mama Coco" by TOB Kids took first place, "Empire Kids" by Empire took second place, and "Coco" by TOB Kids took third place. When it comes to Massa Champion, the winner was Champagne Kids, and for Massa Ambiente, the winner was Don Flip Carnival Group.

The Dancing Queen of the Children's Parade for our Carnival 70 was Nima Whitfield from Little Groovers, and the Dancing King was Darson Naar from TOB Kids.

The award for Children's Group of the Year went to Champagne Kids Carnival Group.

Congratulations to all the winners and thank you for all your efforts in making a sweet and beautiful Carnival 70.

### What's next?

This Friday, February 9th, the Secondary School Parade will take place in Oranjestad. The route begins at Aruba Entertainment Center Dakota, passes through Avenida Milio Croes, Vondellaan, and



ends at Plaza Turismo (Linear Park).

### Group sequence:

- |                                                            |                                     |                                                                       |                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Mon Plaisir College MAVO – HAVO – VVO y Colegio Arubano | 2. La Salle College y Maria College | 3. Colegio San Antonio, Ceque College y International School of Aruba | 4. Colegio EPI y Universidad di Aruba |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|





## Episode CII 102 - Ancient Tourists

It is generally accepted that in the beginning of the Paleo-Lithic era, occupation of the American continent started with archaic hunting and scavenging who followed big mammals like the mammoths in to North America. One possible route of various that these nomads could have followed to reach the Caribbean was from the Floridian pan handle jumping island to island till reaching the southern continent or jumping from the Yucatan peninsula to Cuba and navigating along the Central American Caribbean coast reaching the island. So the most probable maritime route of accessing Aruba must have been from out of the isthmus of Paraganá reaching out of the South American continent. **This would have been the shortest and easiest way to reach our happy island.**

There is no doubt that the distance in the past must have been closer to what today is Venezuela, sea levels where 60 to 90 meters lower, the further you get in



time. The land that today forms an isthmus to the outer side, a land stretch from the coast till the foot hills of the Sta. Anna in South America, so it is a fact that the island is attached to the South American land mass, positioned on or part of the continental shelf. Many animals could have cross

over just as the archaic forefathers have done during thousands of years of acculturation with in an archaic context of existence during thousands of years. They could have reached this part of the world maybe just by walking.

We thinking about twelve

thousand years ago we must imagine that the temperature of our planet earth was six to twelve degrees cooler than it is today in the southwestern Caribbean area, while the Aruba's landscape was also covered with a greater amount of flora then in present time. So, the overall conditions in which these ancient marauders found this land upon their arrival was in every aspect much more favorable than today. This contributed to an easy and a sustainable way of life in a harsh and wild environment. The island's landscape and Topography in many areas offered perfect layouts that formed zones where people were able to walk for hours under a green canopy of a semi rain forest, where trees blocked the incoming sun light during the whole year. Forest consisting of mixed vegetation made out of various types of trees, ferns, orchids, vines and bromeliads etc. Many of these plants have long disappeared and are to be considered extinct and lost to science forever. Who

knows what medicinal properties, food source, color pigment or even an effective insect or vermin repellent these plants could have carried just to keep it simple. Even though it is a small Island, there were also places that were open grasslands or savannas covered with cactus and xerophilous, while other zones where made out of wet lands and maybe natural salt pans. However there were no mango trees or coconut palms, tamarind juice or watermelons and everything they knew about electricity was that it was the father of fire, wind and water and that the earth was their mother and mother of all things. He, who came from beyond the clouds and lit up the night sky with its flash and thundering voice.

To get to know more regarding Aruba's and its origins, its animals culture etc. We highly recommend you to book your participation. Living our cultural encounter session is mind opening and entertaining curious hearts for decades. Mail us at [etnianativa03@gmail.com](mailto:etnianativa03@gmail.com).

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**Article by: Etnia Nativa**

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## Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill



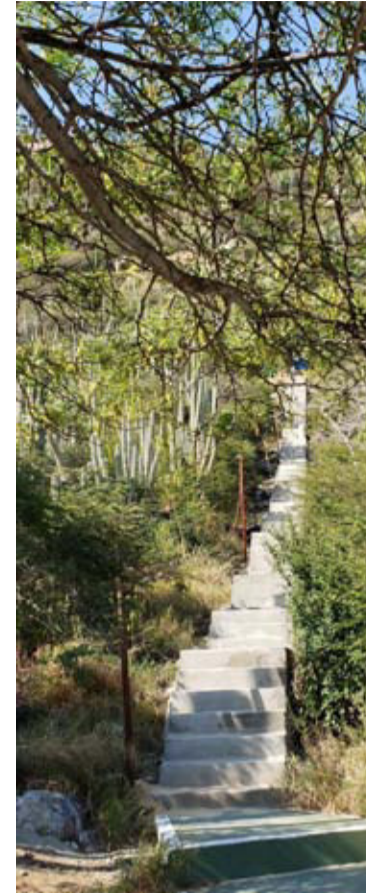
(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.

The staircase that run on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still

be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see.

The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. □

located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jamanota Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the Arikok National Park.



## Why You Should Not Miss Aruba's Free City Center Street Car Tour

ORANJESTAD - Aruba's City Center Street Car - or as we call it in Dutch; "Tram van Oranjestad" - is a single track tram line in Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2012, being the first and so far the only passenger rail service on Aruba and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean. There are two trolleys, a single-deck one with 42 seats and a double-decker with 64 seats. The line was inspired by the popular battery-powered streetcar operation at the Grove in Los Angeles, USA. Aruba's streetcars are powered by hydrogen fuel cells, which are charged by the island's year-round trade winds.

Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-decker offers you a 360 degree view of the down town area with a picture perfect scenery of the island's clear blue skies. Who would not enjoy a ride on this beautiful and naturally air-conditioned vehicle? The tour consists of a total of 9 stops approximately 200 meters apart from each other; all stops are clearly marked. The tram will bring you close to different museums, historical plazas, monuments, the Protestant church, Aruba's high-



end mall, retail shops, and a variety of local and international cuisine restaurants. The "I love Aruba" trademark also belongs to that list. The third stop on the route is close to a 5-minute walk to the famous Renaissance Marina showcasing luxurious yachts and Aruba's blue waters.

The "Tram van Oranjestad" starts from a balloon loop near the Port of Call and serves the downtown area and ends at Plaza Nicky. The first ride starts at 10:00 am sharp with intervals of 25minutes. The last trolley departs from the cruise port at 5:00pm. Don't miss this tour of the beautiful Aruba's City Center—it is free for all! □

**CROSSWORD**

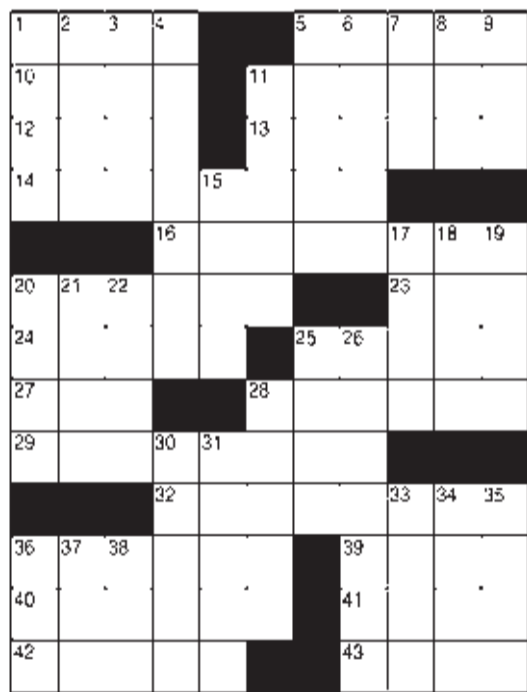
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Full range
  - 5 Tart fruits
  - 10 Except for
  - 11 Riddle question
  - 12 Clumsy ones
  - 13 Link
  - 14 Some ever-greens
  - 16 Flipped fish-eaters
  - 20 Read
  - 23 Diamond club
  - 24 Pop stars
  - 25 Port-au-Prince's nation
  - 27 "Knives Out" star de Armas
  - 28 Horse restraint
  - 29 Remote
  - 32 One way to play
  - 36 Spot for an X
  - 39 — avis
  - 40 Vast expanses
  - 41 Steel ingredient
  - 42 Borscht base
  - 43 Basilica part
- DOWN**
- 1 Since
  - 2 Curbside
  - 3 Finished cry
  - 4 Piquant
  - 5 Pumps, e.g.
  - 6 Baggy
  - 7 Sturdy wood
  - 8 Outback bird
  - 9 Tentative taste
  - 11 Question of place
  - 15 Tamblyn of "West Side Story"
  - 17 Somewhat
  - 18 Past due
  - 19 Mix up
  - 20 Singer Edith
  - 21 Writer Ferber
  - 22 Crowd sound
  - 25 Slugger Aaron
  - 26 Mali neighbor
  - 28 Smarts
  - 30 E's musical equivalent
  - 31 Diving birds
  - 33 Tombstone name
  - 34 Debate group
  - 35 Rational
  - 36 Hope of comedy
  - 37 One in the hand
  - 38 Director Ang



Yesterday's answer

- 20 Singer Edith
- 21 Writer Ferber
- 22 Crowd sound
- 25 Slugger Aaron
- 26 Mali neighbor
- 28 Smarts
- 30 E's musical equivalent
- 31 Diving birds
- 33 Tombstone name
- 34 Debate group
- 35 Rational
- 36 Hope of comedy
- 37 One in the hand
- 38 Director Ang



2-8

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-8

**CRYPTOQUOTE**

QDFE, Z XLVQ LVQ, Z XLVQ T  
FZMMFD CVSD WVQ CPEW T  
GZCAF D MWZLI FZXD T GLVQKTF  
ETL CDTL MV T AD SGVL. — GBFHZT  
AFTMW

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I OFTEN MAKE THE MISTAKE OF THINKING THAT SOMETHING THAT IS OBVIOUS TO ME IS JUST AS OBVIOUS TO EVERYONE ELSE. — CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

# ESPN, Fox, Warner Bros. Discovery are planning a sports streaming platform in the fall

By JOE REEDY  
AP Sports Writer

ESPN, Fox and Warner Bros. Discovery announced plans on Tuesday to launch a sports streaming platform in the fall that will include offerings from at least 15 networks and all four major professional sports leagues. A one-stop app to view most sports should be a welcome sight for fans, who continue to navigate rising costs by subscribing to multiple services. Kevin Krim, the president and CEO of the ad measurement firm EDO, compared the three companies teaming up for sports like what some networks did when Hulu started in 2008. □



This Sept. 16, 2013, file photo shows the ESPN logo prior to an NFL football game between the Cincinnati Bengals and the Pittsburgh Steelers, in Cincinnati.

Associated Press



The Uber logo appears above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Aug. 16, 2019.

Associated Press

# In a first for Uber since becoming a public company, an annual profit.

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN  
AP Business Writer

Uber posted its first full-year profit since going public in 2019 and its stock hit an all-time high Wednesday as strong bookings in the final quarter of the year pushed profit and revenue beyond Wall Street expectations. Like its final year as a private company, the last time Uber turned a profit, it got a huge tailwind from investments that helped fuel profits, \$1 billion in 2023. The difference is that Uber has started making money from operations. "2023 was an inflection point for Uber," said CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said in prepared remarks. Uber and other ride-share companies struggled through the COVID-19 pandemic. The company, whose stock recently joined the S&P 500 index, saw its ride-hailing business stymied as government lockdowns kept millions at home. But Uber has focused on cutting costs and, during the pandemic, building up a then-nascent food-delivery division, which has since become a major revenue driver. Uber's ride-hailing service, meanwhile, has gradually bounced back and the numbers from the fourth quarter suggest both are trending in the right direction. □

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**Editor**  
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**Editors**

Pilar Flores  
Richard Brooks  
Angette Figuero

**Sales**

Mark Gomes  
Sulaika Croes

**Classifieds**

classified@cspnv.com

**Distribution and Collection**

accounting@bondia.com

**Social / Website**

Juan Luis Pinto  
Weststraat 22  
T: 582-7800  
E: news@arubatoday.com  
W: www.arubatoday.com  
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# A village in Bhutan learns about democracy and teaches us, too, in 'Monk and the Gun'

By **JOCELYN NOVECK**  
AP National Writer

"Why are you teaching us to be so rude?" the elderly village woman asks a Bhutanese election official in "The Monk and the Gun." It's a question both poignant and biting, because the "teaching" this woman is resisting is something much of the outside world considers a basic human right: the right to vote.

For a piercing refresher lesson on democracy, one wouldn't necessarily think of rural Bhutan as the first place to look. For one thing, democratic elections only came to the tiny, long-isolated Himalayan kingdom in April 2007, when the country held its first mock vote, leading to the real thing late that year and then the first constitution in 2008.

Writer-director Pawo Choyning Dorji, whose debut feature, "Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom," went all the way to an Oscar nomination, centers his delightful, moving and clever new satire on a moment in 2006 when officials first fan out into the countryside to introduce this concept called "election." TV and internet access are less than a decade old. It does not go smoothly. "Is that a new pig disease?"



This image released by Roadside Attractions shows a scene from "The Monk and the Gun." Associated Press

asks one villager. Others arrive to register, only to discover they need to know their birthdate. Some do not. They're told they need to leave and go find out. But really, many don't see the point. They have a king. They like him. Why go to all this trouble?

But "The Monk and the Gun," as you may have surmised, is not just about democracy. It's also about guns, and their role in society, a particularly fertile theme for Dorji's brand of wry satire and pointed comparisons.

We begin with a young monk, Tashi, attendant to a lama, or spiritual leader, traversing a peaceful field to a mountain village, Ura. He's on his way to hear an unusual request: The lama

needs a gun. Or two. Before the full moon comes in a few days. "Things need to be made right," he says, cryptically.

What could the lama mean? Guns are not a normal part of this society. If there's a gun lying around, it's a big deal. Which leads us to Ron Coleman, an American (Harry Einhorn), and his visit to Bhutan.

"Tell people you're here to see Buddhist temples," Ron's host and fixer Benji (Tandin Sonam) tells him when he arrives. But Ron is there to procure, for a collector, a prized 19th-century American gun that somehow resides with a Bhutanese farmer.

Dorji toggles between these two storylines: politics and guns, with the

clock ticking to both the full moon and the mock election. It's a tumultuous time, with news reports suggesting the transition to democracy is unpopular. As one man says, "What's the use? We already have His Majesty." Another wonders why they'd want to be like countries where politicians throw chairs at each other. The chief organizer has to remind people including a mother whose daughter is being bullied at school that in some countries, people die fighting for the right to vote.

Back to gun dealer Ron (his name is a little nod to cinema buffs who may recall the actor Ron Colman in the 1937 "Lost Horizon"), who's so eager to acquire the historic weapon, he

offers the owner \$75,000. That is not acceptable to the farmer it's too much! So a deal is struck for much less. But while Ron is off collecting the cash, the monk shows up, seeking a gun for his lama.

Who'll get the gun? The rest of the plot is best left unspoiled, but you can be sure Dorji finds a way to tie his threads together in a way both comic and biting, both entertaining and provocative.

A perfect example is that scene where election organizers are trying to educate the masses. With villagers gathered, they explain that different colors stand for different parties. But when they try to generate some obligatory back-and-forth maybe just a little yelling the effort falls flat. "Show some passion! You're supposed to despise each other!" complains one official. Also funny but queasy-making, too, is the way Ron is described by his Bhutanese cohort in an effort to gain respect for his knowledge of guns: "Mr. Ron is an expert. In his country there are more guns than people!"

The casting of the film is fascinating in itself. Most of the cast (including Einhorn, an academic) are making acting debuts here. □

## Freelance journalists win \$100,000 prizes for work impacting underrepresented communities

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Two freelance journalists with projects focused on Black nationalism and the aftermath of the Uvalde school shooting have won the American Mosaic Journalism Prize, which honors work about underrepresented groups in the United States. The journalists, Dara T. Mathis and Tamir Kalifa, were each awarded \$100,000 from the Heising-Simons Foundation. That's believed to be the largest prize in dollar value given to journalists in the United

States. The Maryland-based Mathis was honored for her article in The Atlantic, "A Blueprint for Black Liberation," where she wrote about growing up in a radical Black commune and the broader history of such movements. She's working on expanding that piece into a memoir.

"As a Black writer, I am keenly aware of how the stories of marginalized people are excluded from the archive," Mathis said. "My work as a journalist seeks to

connect silenced histories to our present day."

Photojournalist Tamir Kalifa won for his work on the aftermath of the 2022 mass shooting at the Robb elementary school in Uvalde, Texas. The Austin-based Kalifa is currently in Israel covering the Israel-Hamas war. Kalifa said he's spent the last few years of his career trying to document the resilience of people who are enduring tragedy.

The foundation's yearly award was established in 2018. □



This combination photo show freelance journalists Dara T. Mathis, left, and Tamir Kalifa who have each won a \$100,000 prize from the Heising-Simons Foundation. (Drew Bird, left, and Racien Nowak/Heising-Simons Foundation via Associated Press)

## NFL's first Super Bowl in Las Vegas has plenty of storylines plus an interesting football matchup

By **ROB MAADDI AP**  
Pro Football Writer

**LAS VEGAS (AP)** — The first Super Bowl in Las Vegas has everything the imaginary NFL scriptwriters could've wanted. There's Patrick Mahomes and the underdog Kansas City Chiefs (14-6) aiming to become the first repeat champions in 19 years and trying to solidify their claim to a dynasty with a third Super Bowl title in five years. There's Brock Purdy returning from a significant injury after rising from "Mr. Irrelevant" to now lead the San Francisco 49ers (14-5) to the brink of a record-tying sixth Super Bowl title that would etch his name alongside Pro Football Hall of Famers Joe Montana and Steve Young. Of course, there's the glitz and glamour of America's showcase city and the irony of playing a Super Bowl in this gambling capital, an idea that used to be taboo for the NFL.

Did we mention Taylor Swift yet?

Make room for the Grammy-winning superstar to jet into town just in time to see her boyfriend, Travis Kelce, try to win another ring. Swift is expected to fly in for Sunday's game at Allegiant Stadium from Japan after her concert on Saturday. Kelce, the four-time All-Pro tight end, is focused on limiting the distractions despite fielding numerous questions this week about Swift and their relationship that has captivated millions and attracted a new audience of football fans.



**San Francisco 49ers quarterback Brock Purdy and Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes shake hands during NFL football Super Bowl 58 opening night Monday, Feb. 5, 2024, in Las Vegas.**

"Show up every day thinking about the now and not too much the future," Kelce said. "Obviously, you gotta prepare for what's ahead but not harp on the past is the biggest thing ... I think we would never try and tie in what we did last year to this year. Every single year is really its own journey." For the Chiefs, nothing less than hoisting another Vince Lombardi trophy is acceptable so they have the most pressure. "That expectation has become a demand at this point," Kelce said. "I know the years that we haven't won since we won our first one have felt like the biggest losses of my life. So it's just having that mentality year in, year out, and putting the expectations on

yourself, making sure that no one puts higher expectations on us more than us. We're here to win this thing, baby. That's for sure." Mahomes, the two-time NFL and Super Bowl MVP, is already drawing comparisons to Tom Brady, who won seven Super Bowl rings. Brady won three in his first four seasons as a starter. Mahomes is going for No. 3 in his sixth season. Even if he wins, it's too early to have the conversation. "I'm not even close to halfway, so I haven't put a lot of thought into it," Mahomes said. "I mean, your goal is to be the best player that you can be. I know I'm blessed to be around a lot of great players. And so, right now, it's doing what-

ever I can to beat a great 49ers team and try to get that third ring. And then if you ask me that question in 15 years, and I'll see if I can get close to seven. But seven seems like a long ways away still." This is a rematch of the game the Chiefs won four years ago to give coach Andy Reid his first championship. Niners coach Kyle Shanahan has been close to winning twice before only to see his teams blow big leads. He was Atlanta's offensive coordinator when Brady and the Patriots rallied from a 28-3 second-half deficit to win the Super Bowl in 2017. His 49ers team led the Chiefs 20-10 entering the fourth quarter only to watch Mahomes rally Kan-

sas City to a 31-20 win in Miami in 2020.

"Both of them are heart-breaking," Shanahan said. "Those things last awhile. But it's all about getting back there again, and that's what I'm excited for." Shanahan's dad, Mike, lost two Super Bowls as an offensive coordinator with Denver before going to San Francisco and winning one in 1995. He then won two more as the head coach of the Broncos. "I remember seeing my dad after those Super Bowls when he was a coordinator in Denver when I was younger and how hard it was on him," Shanahan said. "So I think anytime you get that close and you lose the last one, that's definitely the hardest." Jimmy Garoppolo was the team's quarterback last time around. Now, it's Purdy, an AP NFL MVP finalist who overcame all the odds and continues to make critics look foolish. Purdy isn't concerned with proving doubters wrong. He has rare maturity for a 24-year-old that helps him play with confidence and maintain his composure. "It comes down to how do I do my job really well for three hours against the Kansas City Chiefs' defense," Purdy said. "That's where my mindset's at. I want to do everything I can to help my team win. I'm focusing on the plays. I'm focusing on what we're trying to do for this week, not getting caught up in all the paparazzi and all that kind of stuff outside." □

Associated Press

## Tiger Woods makes it official: His 2024 debut will come next week at Riviera

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Tiger Woods confirmed Wednesday he will make his first PGA Tour start since the Masters at the Genesis Invitational next week at Riviera, a tournament he hosts.

Woods posted on social media that he was "excited to be a playing host" when the PGA Tour's next signature event with a \$20 million purse starts on Feb. 15.

Woods also teased about his announcement Monday of new apparel now that he has ended a relationship with Nike that dated to 1996 when he turned pro. "The vision remains the same," he wrote.

Riviera is the course Woods has played the most times — 12 as a pro — without winning.

He withdrew after 36 holes at Riviera with the flu in 2006 and did not return until 2018. A year ago, he tied for 45th. He next played the Masters, making the cut and then withdrawing during a cold, rainy weekend, had ankle surgery and did not return to golf until December.

The Genesis Invitational is a limited field for top performers. Woods will be playing on a sponsor exemption. □

# Players sweep 5 arbitration decisions as Hays, Webb, Ward, Dubón and Bickford all win

**SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (AP)** — Players swept five salary arbitration decisions against major league teams on Tuesday, and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. went to a hearing against Toronto that will set a record whether the star first baseman wins or loses. Baltimore outfielder Austin Hays and pitcher Jacob Webb won their cases along with Los Angeles Angels outfielder Taylor Ward, Houston utilityman Mauricio Dubón and New York Mets reliever Phil Bickford. The unusual sweep gave players a 5-2 advantage with 11 cases still pending. Guerrero asked for \$19.9



Toronto Blue Jays' Vladimir Guerrero Jr. celebrates his two-run home run against the Texas Rangers during the first inning of a baseball game Thursday, Sept. 14, 2023, in Toronto. **Associated Press**

million and the Blue Jays offered \$18.05 million when the sides exchanged figures last month. The result will top the previous high awarded from a hearing, topping the \$14 million Seattle outfielder Teoscar Hernández received after he lost his hearing last year. A three-time All-Star, Guerrero hit .264 with 26 homers and 94 RBIs last year. He is eligible for free agency after the 2025 season. Hays was awarded the \$6.3 million he asked for over the Orioles' proposed \$5.85 million. Brian Keller, Allen Ponak and Jasbir Parmar made the decision after hearing arguments on Jan. 30. The 28-year-old Hays hit .275 last year with 16 homers and 67 RBIs, earning \$3.2 million. The 2023 All-Star is eligible for free agency after the 2025 season. Webb will get \$1 million instead of the team's \$925,000 offer in a decision by Paul Radvany, Scott Buchheit and Ponak, who heard the case last Thursday. A 30-year-old right-hander, Webb had a 3.27 ERA in 25 relief appearances last season. Ward had asked for \$4.8 million compared to the team's offer of \$4.3 million. His case was decided by Jeanne Vonhof, Margaret Brogan and Parmar, who conducted the hearing Friday. The 30-year-old Ward hit .253 last year with 14 homers and 47 RBIs, down from a .281 average with 23 homers and 65 RBIs in 2022. His season ended July 29 when he was hit on the head by a 91 mph fastball from Toronto pitcher Alek Manoah and sustained facial fractures. Dubón won his case for \$3.5 million over the team's offer of \$3 million. The Gold Glove winner's hearing was Monday before John Woods, Jeanne Charles and Janice Johnston. The 29-year-old Dubón hit .278 with 10 homers and 46 RBIs in his first full season with Houston, which acquired him from San Francisco in May 2022. □

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